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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [RS](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: "PEACE MISSION 2007": SHANGHAI COOPERATION
ORGANIZATION MILITARY EXERCISE IN CHELYABINSK

Classified By: A/POL Colin Cleary. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The August 9-17 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) anti-terrorist exercise -- Peace Mission 2007 -- is the largest in the history of the SCO. Approximately 6,500 troops are participating, the bulk from Russia and China. SCO Heads of State, including Chinese President Hu, are expected to observe the conclusion of the exercise in Chelyabinsk August 17, following the SCO Summit in Bishkek. Given China's economic dominance, some Russian analysts see the GOR's emphasis on developing the SCO's military dimension as a way for Russia to assert a leading role in the organization. END SUMMARY.

The Scenario

12. (U) The scenario for the August 9-17 "Peace Mission 2007" exercise in Chelyabinsk involves combating a terrorist takeover of a village. Under the scenario, a reported 6,500 troops from all six SCO countries -- but primarily Russia and China -- work together to defeat terrorists and free hostages. (The first joint military exercise involving Russia and China in decades, Peace Mission 2005, was held on the Shandong Peninsula, China, in August 2005. It was a combined air, land, and sea exercise that involved 8,000 Chinese troops and 2,000 Russian troops. The scenario also involved liberating a territory besieged by terrorists or separatists.)

Counterbalance to the West

13. (C) Director of the World Security Institute Ivan Safranchuk told us August 7 that Russia seeks to use the Peace Mission 2007 exercise to demonstrate to the U.S. and NATO that, despite feelings of mutual suspicion, Russia and China can cooperate on substantive security issues. Cultivating ties with its Asian neighbors through the SCO will increase Russia's stature and better enable it to counter the U.S. and NATO diplomatically. Amherst Professor Vitaly Kozyrev agreed. Russia, he told us, wants to use the SCO, and this year's exercise, to demonstrate its ability to act as a counterweight to the West.

Tensions Within the SCO

14. (C) Vice Director of the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow State University Andrei Karneev told us August 9 that attempts by Russia and China to use the SCO to counter the West could backfire. If the SCO is seen as primarily an anti-U.S. organization, he said, some Central

Asian countries could desert. Kazakhstan, for example, sought close ties with the U.S. to counterbalance the influence of Russia and China in Central Asia. That is why, Karneev said, organizers made sure that the exercise had an anti-terrorist focus and took pains to emphasize that it was not aimed at any particular country.

15. (C) The Head of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis, Alexander Khranchikin, told us August 9 that Peace Mission 2007 highlighted some of the tensions between Russia and China. He noted that Russia sees the exercise as a way to redefine the SCO as being a forum for military as well as economic cooperation. With China as the economic powerhouse of the SCO, the only way for Russia to take a leading role in the organization is to emphasize the military component. He pointed out that many Russian generals feel the Chinese military is making progress toward becoming a formidable fighting force, but still has a long way to go before it catches up to the Russian military.

16. (C) Deputy Executive Director of the Council of Foreign and Defense Policy Alexander Belkin told us Russia's belief in its military superiority over China was misplaced. Many units of the Chinese military, especially the air force and navy, he argued, are better trained and equipped than their Russian counterparts. He noted that China hopes to display some of this military prowess during Peace Mission 2007.

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